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BIBLICAL HEBREW WORDS

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Man in Society (*continued*)

An interesting sidelight on early Israelite society compared with the Canaanite society it had displaced is given by *chopshi*. Among the Canaanites it meant a feudal serf, but among the Israelites a free man. It is normally used of the freed 'Hebrew' slave, Ex. 21:2, 5, 26 f., Dt. 15:12 f., 18, Jer. 34:9-11, 14, 16, Job 3:19, but we find it in a wider sense in 1 Sa. 17:25, Is. 58:6, Job 39:5.

Tribal Organization

We saw earlier that the tribe was the largest group in which a common origin was vitally felt. In addition the territorial divisions of the tribes after the Conquest represented for the most part real geographical divisions of the land. This is insufficiently realized. When Solomon divided Israel into twelve administrative districts (1 Kings 4:7-19), they followed for the most part the old tribal boundaries (see note in *New Bible Commentary ad loc.*), though he could have had no interest in preserving the old divisions. The 'ir was, however, so much the unit of social life, that the only real tribal organization was for war and for the settling of inter-city disputes.

This would be done by the city *zeqenim*, though doubtless in practice, unless a matter of special concern was under discussion, it was left in the hands of the recognized seniors among them. We have no evidence for the breakdown of justice within a tribe in the pre-monarchical period, nor in the context may Jdg. 17:6, 18:1, 21:25 be so understood.

If the quarrel was between members of different tribes, the position was quite different. Jdg. 19-21 shows us that in the face of the hostility of Gibeah the only possibility of justice that the Levite had was to appeal to 'all Israel' (Jdg. 19:29-20:7); equally 'all Israel' was unable to enforce justice against Gibeah without the consent of its tribe, Benjamin (Jdg. 20:12 f.). The difficulty was normally met by the existence of an inter-tribal, or 'amphictyonic', council meeting held at the central sanctuary, it may be at the time of the great pilgrim feasts. Benjamin in

Jdg. 19-21 was clearly for some reason contracting out. Note the lack of hospitality to the Levite (Jdg. 19:15), which implies that he was being regarded as a foreigner. Though most modern scholars would deny it, we are clearly to understand that this organization already existed in the wilderness.

We know nothing of the constitution of this inter-tribal council beyond the fact that it will have been composed of delegates, senior elders, from the various tribes. The technical name for them is *nasi*, which is normally translated 'prince'; in Num. 2 it is twelve times rendered 'captain' and in Num. 3, 4 six times 'chief'; in six other cases we find 'ruler'.

Etymologically *nasi* means someone lifted up, and so of outstanding importance. In practice our translation must depend on our understanding of the social order of the time. In any case 'prince' has for us such a specialized meaning, that it is best entirely avoided. In Genesis RSV uses 'prince' in the four cases (17:10, 23:6, 25:16, 34:2); Moffatt retains it in the first two, has 'sheikh' in the third and 'chief' in the fourth. 'Chief' would probably serve best in all cases. When we come to Israel, RSV normally has 'leader', but 'ruler' in Ex. 22:28, Lev. 4:22. Moffatt uses mainly 'chieftain' or 'chief' in Numbers, but 'leader' in Joshua. This variation is due to his sharing the usual erroneous modern view that the Israelites in the wilderness were a collection of Bedouin clans. The translation 'leader' should probably be used in every case, the more so as it will suit the cases when it is used of the king unless we want this rendering for *nagid*. With the disappearance of the amphictyonic council and the setting up of the monarchy *nasi* is no longer used, except occasionally of the king. This in itself suggests that we should regard it as a strictly technical term, when used of Israel.

In the inter-tribal council two types of men, both called *shopet* (judge), will have exercised a great influence. There were those like Gideon who had not merely delivered their people from foreign oppression, but who had done it in such a way as to demonstrate that the Spirit of the Lord was with them. Their 'judging' of the people does not imply that they held any official position, but rather that they were generally recognized arbitrators

in quarrels that could not be settled on a purely local level. Then there were those like Jair and Ibzan, who knew precisely what the law and the precedents were. The reason why we find Samuel making a circuit annually (1 Sa. 7:15 ff.) is probably that the inter-tribal council had ceased to function after the defeats at Ebenezer and the destruction of Shiloh by the Philistines.

The Monarchy

The king is with a very few exceptions referred to as *melek*. This is a term used impartially for the rulers of Israel and of other countries, and as a title is given rather sparingly to Jehovah. The reason for this reticence will soon be clear.

The root meaning of *melek* is not certain. It may have meant originally 'counsellor', in which case the king was the one whose opinion was decisive. More likely, however, the root meant to own absolutely, and so his subjects were his 'slaves' (cf. Vol. XXVII p. 45 f.). We have earlier discussed the extreme difficulty in translating 'ebed used of man's relationship to Jehovah (Vol. XXVII p. 44 f.); *melek* was probably sparingly used as a title of God, for it would have helped to obscure the relationship of grace between Him and His people, a relationship all too often in practice forgotten. Another reason was that *melek*, like 'el, was a regular name or title for heathen gods, cf. Milcom, the Ammonite god (1 Kings 11:33, etc.). Though it is interpreted otherwise by some moderns, there is little doubt that Molech—Lev. 18:21, 20:2-5, 2 Kings 23:10, Jer. 32:35—has been deliberately given the wrong vowels by the rabbis, and we should read *melek*. The human sacrifices were sacrificed to Jehovah the King (see especially Jer. 7:31) in their reduction of Him to the level of the surrounding gods. It may be that the sacrifices were offered to Him under the title *melek* because of His absolute claim on all a man had.

Not only was there a danger in using the title *melek* of God, but also of man. As a result in a number of key passages we find the king called *nagid*. Its root meaning seems to be 'conspicuous', 'out in front', and hence it means 'a leader'. In the nineteen cases where it is not used of the king, 'commander', 'chief officer', or 'leader' normally gives the meaning. Job 29:10, 31:37 are

interesting. In the former 'nobles' has the wrong connotation; better is 'magnates' (Moffatt) or 'chieftains' (Knox)—'nobles' should be used in the previous verse (so Moffatt, Knox) instead of the completely misleading 'princes' (*sarim*, see below). In the latter 'prince' is far too weak; the nearest idiomatic rendering is 'king'.

That *nagid* was in suitable contexts a virtual synonym of *melek* is shown by Ps. 76:12 and Ezek. 28:2 compared with 28:12*. The people acclaimed Saul as *melek* (1 Sa. 10:24), but Samuel had anointed him *nagid* at the first (1 Sa. 9:16, 10:1). The same word is significantly used in 1 Sa. 13:14, 25:30, 2 Sa. 5:2, 6:21, 7:8, 1 Chr. 5:2, 29:22, 1 Kings 14:7, 16:2, 2 Kings 20:5, 2 Chr. 6:5, Is. 55:4, Dan. 9:25 f., etc. In contrast to the variety of translations in AV, RV, uses 'prince' throughout, sometimes with 'leader' in the margin (the one exception is Is. 55:4 where we have 'leader' with 'prince' in the margin); RSV and Moffatt have the same usage, with a few variants. 'Prince' is in every way misleading; 'leader' is probably the only suitable translation. In the popular mind the *melek* stood out over against his people, their possessor, for he was the representative of the gods, if not divine himself, yet having something of the nimbus of divinity around him. God calls His king *nagid*, for he is one of the people, whom God has called to lead and care for them—cf. the frequent metaphorical use of shepherd for the king.

Ezekiel reacts against the absolutism implicit in *melek* in another way. In speaking of the king to be he uses *nasi*'—Ezek. 34:24, 37:25, (but note 37:24) 44:3 and frequently in chs. 44-48—to suggest that there will be no grasping by him of what belongs to God alone. There is another use of *nasi*' in 1 Kings 11:34, Ezek. 7:27, 12:10, 12, 21:25 and probably 19:1, 21:17, 22:6, 45:8, 9. Here the title of *melek* is withheld from those unworthy of it. In both cases 'prince' is misleading. The one difficulty in using 'leader', as suggested earlier, is its suitability for *nasi*'.

Though the king did not normally interfere with the old self-rule of the cities, though he would have his representative in the

* The same person is meant in both verses; see my *Ezekiel: the Man and his Message ad loc.*

larger ones, he governed the country directly through men who were directly dependent on him, who were therefore technically his slaves ('*ebed*'). Among those who exercised power we find 'the king's sons'; it would be well, if we could confine the translation 'prince' to them.

We have already noted the mistranslation of *nasi* and *nagid* as 'prince'. There is even less excuse for thus rendering *nadib*, for by its very etymology it means 'noble', and it should so be rendered in 1 Sa. 2:8, Job 12:21, 21:28, 34:18, Ps. 47:9, 107:40, 113:8, 118:9, 146:3, etc. Behind the use of *nadib* lies the assumption that a man in a position of authority should have a corresponding character, cf. Is. 32:5.

The word most commonly translated 'prince' is *sar*, which is, however, also rendered 'captain' and 'ruler', etc. In Accadian it meant king, and was especially used in the plural to represent the sub-kings who were the king's direct representatives. So it came to be used in Hebrew meaning the great officers of the court in general and then for any people of outstanding rank and importance. The rendering 'prince' introduces a connotation that does not exist in the word, though it is quite suitable in exceptional contexts like Dan. 10:13, 20, 21, 12:1. 'Captain' has largely lost its meaning in modern English, so it too remains unsuitable, and in military contexts should be replaced by 'commander'. We shall find ourselves using courtier, noble, notable man, chieftain, official, leader, head, etc. The thing to note is that under the monarchy, though certain positions might well be passed on from father to son, yet fundamentally the *sar* owed his position entirely to the king and was simply a royal officer.

We have a list of Solomon's high officials (*sarim*) in 1 Kings 4:2-6 (see note in *New Bible Commentary ad loc.*). There is the *soper*, i.e., Scribe or Secretary; *mazkir* is wrongly translated Recorder; it should be the (king's) Remembrancer. Benaiah was commander-in-chief (*sar*) of the militia and Azariah controlled the Lord-Lieutenants ('officers') enumerated in vv. 7-19. For 'the king's friend' cf. 2 Sa. 15:37, 16:16; he was a sort of privy councillor, in the literal sense of the term. The last two are the royal Chamberlain and the Controller of the Levy for forced

labour. Since taxes were almost entirely paid in kind, the Levy was of the utmost importance to the king for public works. It made its appearance already under David (2 Sa. 20:24) and was the most burdensome aspect of the monarchy for the ordinary man (cf. 1 Sa. 8:11-18).

THE PENTATEUCH OF SUFFERING

H. C. HEWLETT

5. The Gain of the Cross (Isaiah 53: 10-12)

The final verses in this Song are unmistakable in their likeness of theme to the book of Deuteronomy. The latter looks backwards and forwards, backwards over God's dealings with His people, and forwards to their life in the land of promise. The lessons of the past are gathered together, and the heart is gladdened by the prospect of the inheritance. So it is in Isaiah 53:10-12. The path of suffering trodden by Jehovah's Servant, and especially the lonely valley of His atoning death, are seen to lead to a surpassing goal. The Cross has its immeasurable gain. Its sorrows are past, and the Crucified enters into His glory.

It is abundantly evident that in verses 11 and 12 it is God who speaks. Here again is the expression 'My Servant', which none but God could use concerning the Messiah, and here is the Divine decree which gives Him the redeemed as His inheritance. Verse 10 is considered by many to be spoken by Israel in its penitence, as with verses 1-6. It is more satisfactory, however, to find here the meditation of the prophet himself. He has pondered the words of his prophecy (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-11), and that greatest of all mysteries, the laying of the burden of sin upon the Servant by God Himself. So he muses—'It pleased the Lord to bruise Him'. Then with a flash of revelation he sees its meaning. The wonder of the sequence of suffering and glory lights his soul, and triumphantly he addresses God: 'when Thou shalt make His soul an